Authoritative Sources

RANKING LEGEND	**Primary Source: Excellent / Preferred**	✓	These sources are created directly by the entity (a.k.a., service provider). Information from these sources can be used to update structures for entry into the database.
	Secondary Source: Conditional / Acceptable	!	These sources are typically created by: a) service recipients, or parties receiving services from the structure/entity; or b) regulators governing the entity's operations. There is a slight risk to these because secondary sources are not updated as frequently/quickly as primary sources, and may not reflect recent name changes, relocations, etc. Information from these sources can be used to update structures if all others have been exhausted. ***Before using these, make note of how often the information is updated.***
	Aggregate / Third Party Source: NOT AUTHORITATIVE	✗	Authors of these sources are neither service providers nor service recipients. They are third-party entities that consume and distribute information about service providers. Users are discouraged from using these since we cannot verify the source or accuracy of this information.

The list below provides examples of authoritative sources for each structure type and their corresponding rank/preference as a source.

Structure Type	Sources	Ranking	Search Tips
Schools:			
For all schools, including: **- General Schools** **- Elementary Schools** **- Middle Schools** **- High Schools** **- Colleges/Universities** **- Technical/Trade Schools**	**School District Websites**	✓	Example: http://www.plymouth.k12.in.us/
	Individual School Websites	✓	Example: http://www.plymouth.k12.in.us/webster
	Facebook Pages	✓	Before using information from a FaceBook page, make sure the page is official. (see page 6 of our July 2017 newsletter for more on official FaceBook pages)
	First-hand / Personal Knowledge	✓	Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community. When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this school on the way to work each day.")
	Government Websites (*.gov or *.us)	!	Example: State Department of Education databases, city websites, etc.
	Local News Articles	!	Use only when comfirming a school has closed; i.e., web searches for the school name and the word "closed" often produce news articles announcing the closing
	National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)	!	https://nces.ed.gov/datatools/
	National Association for Independent Schools	!	https://www.nais.org/find-a-school/
	National Parochial Schools Association	!	http://www.parochial.com/
	Commercial or Third-Party Websites	✗	Example: www.greatschools.org Example: www.schooldigger.com
Public Services:			
- Fire Station / EMS Station	**Fire District Websites**	✓	Frequently founder under "Stations" or "Apparatus" Example: https://www.scgov.net/government/emergency-services/fire-department
	Facebook Pages	✓	Before using information from a FaceBook page, make sure the page is official. (see page 6 of our July 2017 newsletter for more on official FaceBook pages)
	First-hand / Personal Knowledge	✓	Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community. When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day.")
	Government Websites (*.gov or *.us)	!	Example: state firemarshal; county, city, or township websites (If no individual webiste can be found for the entity, a government website is then promoted from secondary to a primary source)
	U.S. Fire Administration	!	https://www.usfa.fema.gov/
	Commercial or Third-Party Websites	✗	Example: http://fire-departments.org/ Example: www.firedepartment.net

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- Post Office	U.S. Postal Service	✓	http://www.usps.gov/
	First-hand / Personal Knowledge	✓	Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community. When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day").
	USPS's Postmaster Finder	!	A helpful tool for locating older Post Offices: https://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postmasterfinder/welcome.htm
	Commercial or Third-Party Websites	✗	Example: www.local.com Example:www.manta.com
- Law Enforcement	Individual Department Websites	✓	Example: http://mtsterlingil.com/police-department/
	Facebook Pages	✓	Before using information from a FaceBook page, make sure the page is official. (see page 6 of our July 2017 newsletter for more on official FaceBook pages)
	First-hand / Personal Knowledge	✓	Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community. When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day").
	Government Websites (*.gov or *.us)	!	Example: State Department of Public Safety; county, city, or township websites, etc. (If no individual webiste can be found for the entity, a government website is then promoted from secondary to a primary source)
	Professional Associations	!	Example: Louisiana Sheriff's Association (http://www.lsa.org/public/sheriffdirectory.aspx)
	Commercial Websites	✗	Example: http://www.usacops.com/
- Prison / Correctional Facility	Individual Facility Websites	✓	Most prisons are government operated and have a government website. Some can be privately owned/operated and usually under governmental oversight (contract, etc.). Example: http://www.cca.com/locations
	First-hand / Personal Knowledge	✓	Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community. When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day").
	Federal Bureau of Prisons	✓	http://www.bop.gov/
	Government Websites (*.gov or *.us)	!	Example: State Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, city websites, etc. (If no individual webiste can be found for the entity, a government website is then promoted from secondary to a primary source)
Health Services:			
- Hospital / Medical Center	Individual Facility Websites	✓	Example: http://medicalcityhospital.com/
	First-hand / Personal Knowledge	✓	Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community. When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day").
	US Department of Veterans Affairs	✓	https://www.va.gov/find-locations/
	State or County health departments	!	Example: http://www.dshs.texas.gov/facilities/find-a-licensee.aspx?terms=emergency%20directory
	Commercial Websites	✗	Example: www.healthgrades.com
- Ambulance Services	Individual Facility Websites	✓	The website should list the community as its client. Example: https://mytexasems.org/about/
	First-hand / Personal Knowledge	✓	Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community. When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day").
	Government Websites (*.gov or *.us)	!	County, city, township websites, fire department websites, etc. (If no individual webiste can be found for the entity, a government website is then promoted from secondary to a primary source)
	State or County health departments	!	Example: http://www.azdhs.gov/documents/preparedness/emergency-medical-services-trauma-system/ambulance/ground/con-provider-list.pdf
	Professional Associations	!	Example: National Association of State EMS Officials https://www.nasemso.org/About/StateEMSAgencies/StateEMSAgencyListing.asp
	Commercial Websites	✗	Example: www.yelp.com Example: www.manta.com Example: www.merchantcircle.com

Authoritative Sources

Structure Type	Sources	Ranking	Search Tips
- Cemetery	Individual Graveyard Websites	✓	Example: http://www.springgrove.org/
	Church Websites	✓	Many cemeteries are located on church properties. Church websites often include address information and may have photos of the adjacent cemetery.
	First-hand / Personal Knowledge	✓	Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community. When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day").
	Find A Grave	✓	These are authoritative if the entry has photos and the number of interments/burials recorded. www.findagrave.com
	Billion Graves	!	These are authoritative if the entry has photos and the number of interments/burials recorded. https://billiongraves.com
	USGenWeb	!	These are authoritative if the entry has photos and the number of interments/burials recorded. www.usgenweb.org
	topoView	!	A helpful resource for confirming locations of old cemeteries mapped on older and historic USGS Topographic Maps. May not show all cemeteries or names of cemeteries. https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/topoview/
	Genealogy sites	!	To confirm a cemetery's official name, identify which county the cemetery is located in, perform a Google search for the county name and the word "genealogy", and see if local genealogy groups list the cemetery.
	Gazetteer websites	✗	Example: http://roadsidethoughts.com/ Example: www.hometownlocator.com
Government Buildings:			
- City / Town Hall	Official Website for the City or Township (*.gov or *.us)	✓	Internet searches for the name of the city / township usually produce an official website with the locations of government operations. Use of the term "City Hall" or "Municipal Building" can help refine search results for bigger municipalities (e.g., "Chicago" and "City Hall").
	First-hand / Personal Knowledge	✓	Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community. When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I work next door to the city's municipal building").
	Wikipedia	!	Lists on Wikipedia are a good starting point, as long as users verify that the structures listed are active. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Cities_in_Alabama
	Commercial Websites	✗	Example: www.niche.com
- County Courthouse	Government Websites (*.gov or *.us)	✓	Internet searches for the term "Courthouse" and the county name (e.g., "Avoyelles Parish" in Louisiana and "Courthouse") usually produce public websites with county courthouse locations.
	First-hand / Personal Knowledge	✓	Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community. When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day").
	National Center for State Courts (NCSC)	!	Browsing by state provides valuable insight on how the court system is structured in each state. Each state also has a *Court Structure Chart* that shows which courts operate at the county level. http://www.ncsc.org/Information-and-Resources/Browse-by-State/State-Court-Websites.aspx
	Court Reference	!	A good starting point, as long as users verify the structures with an authoritative source (i.e., government website or firsthand knowledge). http://www.courtreference.com/
	Wikipedia	!	Lists on Wikipedia are a good starting point, as long as users verify that the structures listed are active. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_county_courthouses_in_Texas
	National Register for Historic Places	!	A good starting point, as long as users verify that the structures are actively being used by the courts.
	Commercial Websites	✗	Example: www.publicrecordsreviews.com/Courthouse-Records Example: www.manta.com
- State Supreme Court	Government Websites (*.gov or *.us)	✓	Internet searches for the term "Supreme Court" and the state name (e.g., "Texas" and "Supreme Court") usually produce public websites with supreme court locations.
	First-hand / Personal Knowledge	✓	Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community. When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I work next door to the State Supreme Court building").
	National Center for State Courts (NCSC)	✓	Browsing by state provides valuable insight on how the court system is structured in each state. http://www.ncsc.org/Information-and-Resources/Browse-by-State/State-Court-Websites.aspx
	Wikipedia	!	Lists on Wikipedia are a good starting point, as long as users verify that the structures listed are active. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_supreme_court
	Commercial Websites	✗	Example: www.uslegal.com
- US Supreme Court	Government Websites (*.gov or *.us)	✓	DO NOT COLLECT: There is only one structure/point for the US Supreme Court and it has already been collected.